



Regulating For Resilience in an Earthquake Vulnerable City: The Wellington Case Study

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Purpose

To conduct immanent and normative critique of the regulatory frame around building safety in New Zealand with a focus on Wellington multi-storey buildings and to consider an improved framework on the basis of this critique.

Abstract

The current regulatory framework around seismic resilience in New Zealand is fragmented and unfocussed. Although references to seismic resilience are found across the legislative canon, from the built environment perspective, at its core is the Building Act 2004. This Act, particularly the recent amendments around seismic safety introduced by the Building (Earthquake-prone Building) Amendment Act 2016 provides the legal basis for building requirements in New Zealand, including seismic resilience.

The focus of the Act (or more accurately its interpretation) is narrow and focussed on life safety in individual buildings. In addition, the application of engineering science through the Act is problematic with a lack of clarity as to the line between policy and science.

The working hypothesis of this project is that, despite recent amendments, the current legislative framework will not deliver a seismically resilient urban environment. This is particularly true in the Wellington CBD where the risks of significant seismic events are high. The result is a regulatory frame which will not take Wellington to a resilient state where the city's recovery will be possible. Resolving this requires a fundamentally different approach to how resilience is conceived and implemented through both the legislation and the regulatory processes that flow from it.

Three Phase Methodology

Map the current regulatory framework and its impact upon the built environment in the short and medium term. A desk based analysis plus structured interviews of how local authorities (the key policy administrators) utilise the current Building Act, associated Acts and the wider regulatory frame.

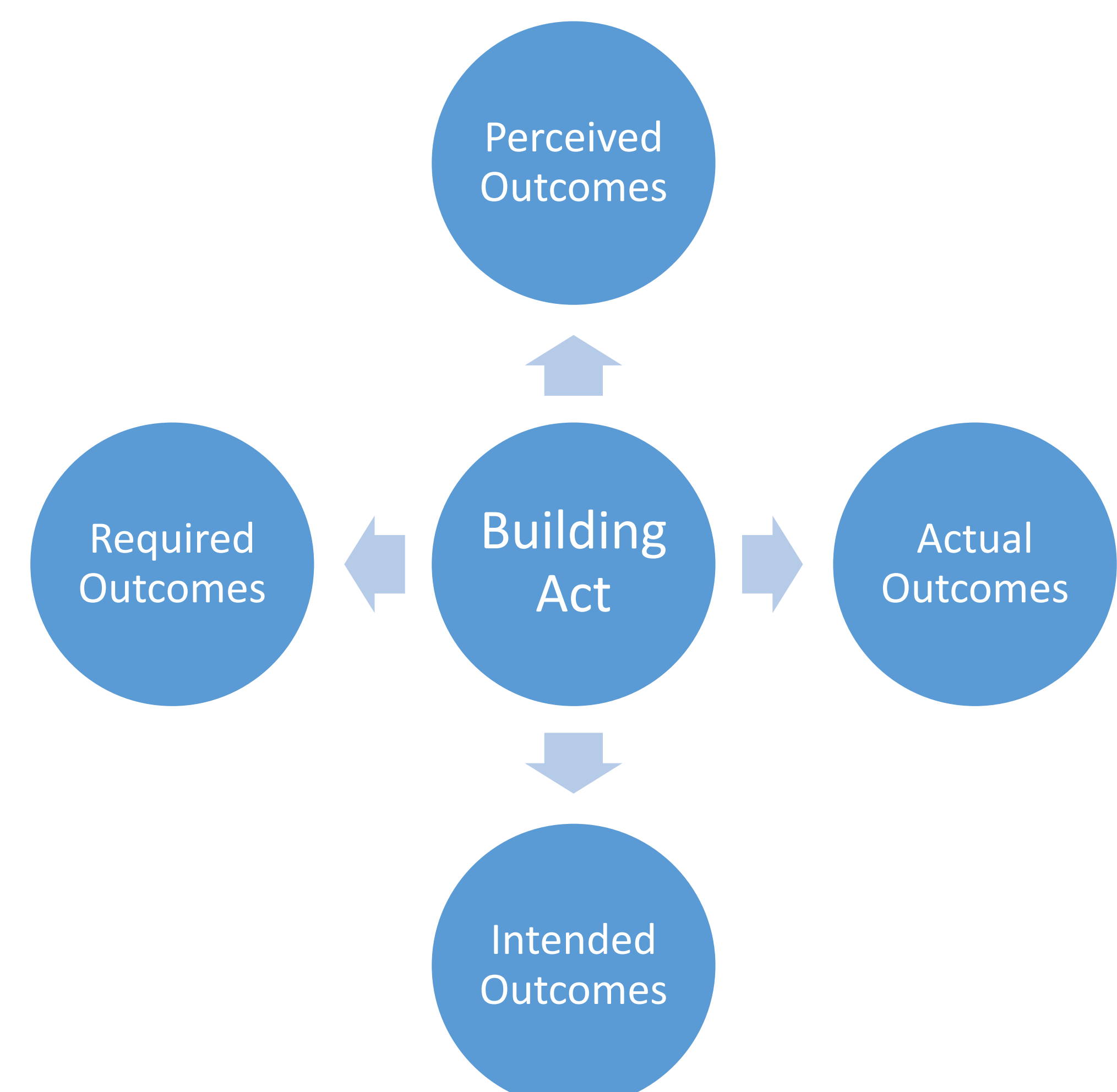
Analyse alternative regulatory solutions to achieve a resilient built environment which is capable of recovery within a reasonable timeframe. Consider moves towards a comprehensive regulatory environment around seismic resilience. In a building context explore mechanisms to ensure a greater focus upon the needs of recovery rather than a narrow focus on life safety.

Propose a holistic regulatory approach to seismic building resilience and urban recovery regulation. Working from a non-exceptionalist (anti-Schmittian) model, the project will propose a regulatory scheme that explicitly links desired urban recovery outcomes in the Wellington CBD with engineering safety outputs.

Projected Project Outcomes

To move towards a coherent legislative model around seismic building regulation with clear, informed and agreed community outcomes. These outcomes will frame regulatory outputs focussed on the level of resilience required to ensure a recoverable Wellington CBD.

Current Model



Proposed Ideal Model

Clear Outcome

Recoverable
Wellington CBD

Outcome Linked
Legislative
Purpose

Building Act
Purposed Towards
Recovery

Outputs Links to
Outcome

Regulatory Powers
to Allow Creation
of Recoverable
Wellington CBD

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